

California Biodiversity Council Regional Meeting

October 6, 1999

Granlibakken Conference Center
Lake Tahoe, California

MEETING NOTES

Members Present:

Mary D. Nichols (Chair), Resources Agency
Patrick Wright, Resources Agency
Robert Hight, Department of Fish and Game
Carl Rountree, Bureau of Land Management
Nancy Huffman, Northern California Counties Association
Robert Meacher, Regional Council of Rural Counties
Ken Jones, Department of Parks and Recreation
Brad Powell, USDA Forest Service
Vanessa Arellano, Department of Food and Agriculture
Paul Thayer, State Lands Commission
Pat Meehan, Department of Conservation
Bill Vance, California Environmental Protection Agency
Karyn Gear, State Coastal Conservancy
Barbara McDonnell, California Department of Transportation
Alex Glazer, University of California
Bob Haussler, California Energy Commission
Mietek Kolipinski, National Park Service
Jeffrey Vonk, Natural Resources Conservation Service
Mike Spear, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
Frank Michny, Bureau of Reclamation
Alexis Strauss, U.S. Environmental Protection Agency
Mike Shulters, U.S. Geological Survey
Debbie Maxwell, USGS Biological Resources
Jim Bybee, National Marine Fisheries Service, NOAA
Colonel Dave Linnebur, U.S. Marine Corps
Paul Stein, Sacramento-Mother Lode Regional Association of California Counties
John Schramel, California Association of Resource Conservation Districts
Jerry Harmon, San Diego Association of Governments
Doug Balmain, San Joaquin Valley Regional Association of California Counties
Dale Hoffman-Floerke, Department of Water Resources
John Coleman, California Conservation Corps
Dale Claypoole, State Water Resources Control Board

Meeting welcome by Resources Agency Secretary Mary Nichols, acting with Plumas County Supervisor/RCRC Second Vice President Robert Meacher as co-chairs for the joint meeting.

Council Announcements

- Brad Powell (US Forest Service) reminded Council members that the Sierra Nevada Framework update is at 1:30 PM and is part of the Council's agenda.

- Jeff Vonk (NRCS) announced USDA Secretary Glickman's "natural resources forums" being held around the country with one planned for Sacramento.
- Secretary Nichols announced the Water Forum being held at 3:00 PM.
- Tom Wehri (CARCD) announced that CARCD will be meeting at Granlibakken later this month.
- Secretary Nichols announced that Nina Gordon is joining the Resources Agency staff as liaison to the CBC.
- Secretary Nichols presented an award to Marc Horshovsky for his work leading the CRMP Technical Committee. Award was signed by Mary Nichols and Jeff Vonk. Related to this, NRCS will be taking over leadership of the Committee for the next two years, with Diane Holcomb, NRCS, as lead.

Program: Lake Tahoe - Challenges and Opportunities (panel)

Secretary Nichols introduced panel moderator Dave Solaro, Supervisor, El Dorado County. Supervisor Solaro introduced individual panelists for their presentations, as follows:

Dennis Machida, Executive Officer, Tahoe Conservancy, provided an overview of ongoing programs at the Lake in bioregional terms. Dennis said that in many ways Lake Tahoe was a precursor to looking at environmental issues in ecosystem terms. Dennis reviewed the biophysical character of the Lake and the history of development, and the consequent impacts and loss of diversity (issues including clarity of water, declining forest health, transportation impacts). The good news is that people do place a value on Lake Tahoe, and there has been a growing recognition of the threats to the Lake and resources devoted to saving the Lake. There is still a will to save Lake Tahoe, though it is enormously complicated politically and biologically. Dennis focused on three strategies: Research and Monitoring, which has provided foundation for all the work to date; establishment of Tahoe Regional Planning Agency in 1969; and Acquisition and Restoration. Tahoe offers a sense of time as to how long it takes to do the research/resource assessment/monitoring. TRPA was charged to do land use planning in an ecosystem framework from its inception. The acquisition and restoration strategy is over 100 years old, originally led by U.S. government through U.S. Forest Service. State of California became important in this strategy later, particularly through California State Parks acquisition. Over \$350 million has been invested in saving the Lake over the last 15 years.

These broad, formal strategies don't really deal with the issue of sustainability, but there has been learning about sustainability over the last 15 years. Principals learned included 1) there is a role for consensus and that its value shows up in agreement on projects, etc., over the long term, 2) value shift required with realization that there was a need to honor both sustainable environment and sustainable economy, 3) public/private collaboration is critical and local government participation in environmental initiatives is essential, 4) this is not about a project, but about a way of interacting with ecosystem process, and 5) investment is critical to achieve ecosystem sustainability. How to fit the needed funding to existing governmental decision-making structures—how does the pot of funds available to California, for example, get distributed—is a major dilemma.

Carl Hasty, Tahoe Regional Planning Agency, provided a regional approach to planning. The hook for TRPA are the thresholds; the bi-state compacts make TRPA accountable for meeting the thresholds. TRPA was to take a 20-year perspective, lay out plan in concert with the other stakeholders. Realization that this was a feasible timeline led to the EIP program and to focus on investments. This requires a

massive shift in thinking, to try to blend all agency decision-making processes into a concerted effort. Must have coordinated, focussed funding and supported prioritization. Finally, must truly work as a team, understand and organize in that structure. Must deal with obstacles, institutionalize the process, and stay the path.

Ed Gee, Acting Forest Supervisor, LTBMU (representing Federal agencies): Spoke to four key points of Lake Tahoe Watershed assessment: accomplishments, lessons learned, barriers and challenges, and role for the Biodiversity Council. The Watershed Assessment is the first study of its kind. The collaborative effort among scientists sets a precedent. The origin is in the presidential deliverables resulting from President's visit to Lake Tahoe in 1997. Interagency, public/private leadership is essential. The Assessment should be completed by January 2000. Lessons learned include the inevitable time delays, the need for a clear vision from the outset, and the importance of a cohesive science team. Extensive interaction with citizen groups and agency oversight groups such as the Federal Advisory Committee are critical. The role of the Biodiversity Council can be support, funding, identification of future assessment needs, and help integrate with the Sierra Nevada Framework process.

Rochelle Nason, Executive Director, League to Save Lake Tahoe (also representing Tahoe Transportation and Water Quality Coalition): League is the primary environmental group in the Basin. The League originally focussed on development, regulatory and planning issues—getting control of the out-of-control growth at Lake Tahoe. It later became clear that this focus would not address many of the remaining issues that could not be addressed from regulatory perspective (such as saving wetlands). It was obvious that they couldn't proceed without community ownership in saving the Lake. The Nevada Gaming Coalition recognized that increasing capacity for economic growth would have to come in an environmentally sustainable manner. Tahoe Transportation Coalition took on this challenge at an early date and developed a plan that garnered a high level of agreement and support. The Coalition then took on the issue of funding for restoration and planning, culminating in a presidential visit and some additional funding. An area where they have not been successful is in educating homeowners about what they should be doing on their own property. This is now a focus and homeowners seem eager for information on how to be involved.

Kerry Miller, City Manager, South Lake Tahoe: Kerry's role is one of understanding what has to be done to achieve what needs to be done in the Basin, in terms of infrastructure, funding, etc. South Lake Tahoe Redevelopment Program has been most significant initiative for City of South Lake Tahoe over the last few years. Original city planning was done with little regard for anything other than economic objectives. But in the mid-1980s they came to understanding that they could not achieve economic objectives without taking care of environmental consequences. Environmental improvement became most important objective of the Redevelopment Plan. Goal became one of mobilizing funding necessary to achieve that objective, which then created impetus for achieving the economic objectives. Without the environment the Basin is no different from LA or Las Vegas. They are also dealing with beautification of the man-made environment. Community committed to redevelopment of the urban core, including removing some structures and building others, all with environmental restoration and sustainability in mind. Public investment of \$8 million annually over about 25 years, out of a city budget of \$16 million. They have forged a model for taking diverse interests and working collaboratively to achieve overall common objective. They no longer know how to operate any other way. Thoughts about how the Council might help: collaborate with the Basin in forming multi-regional strategies for funding and other support; and provide advocacy, particularly at the federal level, to acquire resources to meet the environmental objectives.

Irene Itamura, District Director, District 3, CALTRANS (representing State of California agencies): The state is working to provide a coordinated response to planning and project implementation in the Basin.

There has been over \$40 million in state funding to support TRPA's EIP objectives. There is a need to learn what is working and what still needs to be done. To maximize the State's efforts, a multi-agency State Planning Group is being formed to coordinate strategies for meeting EIP objectives, including providing the state's share of committed funding.

Tim Seward, Director of Environmental Planning and General Counsel, Washoe Tribe (for Brian Wallace, Chair, Washoe Tribe): Lake Tahoe at one time was summer home for all tribal members. The tribal leaders have joint goals of being able to return the tribe to Lake Tahoe and restore the Lake to its natural state. Everyone has agreed that there is one overall goal, the restoration and preservation of Lake Tahoe. Washoe Tribe has four goals which tie closely to Lake Tahoe: restoration of health and well-being of the people; restoration of the original tribal lands; restoration of a Tribal economy linked to the environment; and return of the Tribe to its homeland. The Tribe is currently involved in restoration effort at Meeks Meadow with USFS, USEPA, and NRCS. This is a 30-year effort and the hope is to pull in as many partners as possible. The Tribe is involved in seeking innovative ways to marry the interests of state/local/federal agencies and public/private entities. They are also working on land acquisition projects. The Tribe recognizes that there is some trepidation about their current level of involvement in the Basin and want to assure everyone that their overall goals are consistent with those of the rest of the Tahoe community. Cooperative agreements and cooperative efforts such as those going on in the Basin require great effort to sustain; the CBC could play a major role in seeing that happens. The Council could also play a role in supporting the continued growth in funding for the Basin. For the Washoe Tribe, traditionally there was a marriage of the economy and the environment; their involvement at Lake Tahoe is a natural outgrowth of that philosophy.

John Upton, Citizen and former President, CSAC: freezing in place an unsatisfactory status quo is lose-lose. Recognizing that regulation alone wouldn't work at Tahoe was key. Interests must get to a shared philosophy about how to get things done. Real environmental problems that affect the economy are things that you can unite people around. Property rights and environmental issues must have a funded solution. Everybody is an environmentalist until you tell them they can't do something with their land - use performance standards rather than regulation where you can. There must be a systems approach to planning that allows addressing problems through projects. Partnership between all the agencies at Tahoe is critical.

Supervisor Solaro: 1) Designate Lake Tahoe as an "area of interest" —agendaize us for ongoing interaction; 2) collaborate with us.

Secretary Nichols closing remarks: the Council can heartily accept the recommendations and commit to an ongoing, long-term relationship with the Basin.

Executive Committee Report, Carl Rountree, BLM

The Executive Committee will take the comments and recommendations from this meeting and put together a strategy for the Council to carry them forward. Next Council meeting will look at history and future of Council. The Council is working with Bill Hayward in looking at the Palm Springs area to plan meeting late March/early April in that area. New members at the table today include CCC and SWRCB. Also investigating Native American representation to the Council. Next meeting is December 4 in Sacramento at which these issues, watershed workgroup activity will be discussed.

Secretary Nichols noted that \$50 million is designated for Tahoe Conservancy in the Parks Bond, as well as other monies going to individual agencies in the Basin. She sees this as a major potential infusion of dollars into the Basin from the state level. Web site at www.stateparks.org has information about the Parks Bond that can be shared.

Sierra Nevada Framework for Conservation and Collaboration

In January 1998, the Forest Service Pacific Southwest (PSW) Region and the PSW Research Station initiated a collaborative effort to incorporate new information into the management of Sierra Nevada national forests. This effort, known as the Sierra Nevada Framework for Conservation and Collaboration, incorporates the latest scientific information into national forest management through broad public and interagency participation in natural resource planning. Brad Powell and Hal Salwasser lead a discussion on the current status and goals of the Framework. The original vision of the 'Framework' was much bigger than the current EIS project that the Forest Service has undertaken. It was a 'framework' of shared leadership and collaboration that would help solve the complex problems that transcend administrative boundaries.

The Sierra Nevada Ecosystem Project (SNEP) and the Sierra Nevada Science Review are the foundation of the document which focuses on five problem areas. These include old forest ecosystems and associated species, aquatic, riparian and meadow ecosystems and associated species, fire and fuels, noxious weeds and lower westside hardwood forest ecosystems. The draft EIS should be ready for public review in late December and or early January. The EIS has forged new ground in trying new, more open ways to engage the public in the process and has invited other agencies to the table through-out the development of the document.

Watershed Forum

Secretary Nichols opened the Forum with some remarks on where we are in the State and where we want to be in terms on healthy, sustainable watersheds. She reaffirmed the State's commitment to support efforts that restore the Californias watersheds. The focus of the afternoon forum was to discuss draft legislation that had been developed to restore watersheds around the State. Secretary Nichols stated she was excited to explore the hard work that had been done by the Regional Council of Rural Counties and the Sierra Nevada Alliance to create this draft legislation. She said good efforts were going on around the State in many diverse watersheds. The challenge will be to figure out how to best support these efforts and help generate new watershed coalitions.

Supervisor Meacher said that much emphasis had been put on declining infrastructure in California. The natural infrastructure has been overlooked and needs critical attention and funding now. Martha Davis added that the draft legislation is a bold move toward supporting and initiating collaborative watershed planning and bringing in the resources needed to accomplish the plans. It's time to reinvest in our primary resources. The speakers emphasized that the draft legislation is truly a draft and now is the time to discuss, critique and provide feedback.

Panelists_- "hands on" watershed practitioners, leading or involved in four very diverse watershed restoration groups: Supervisor Ralph Modine - Trinity River (Hayfork); Nettie Drake - Panoche/Silver Creek Resource Conservation District (San Joaquin Riv.); John Schramel - Feather River Resource Conservation District; Richard Atwater - General Manager Inland Empire Utility District (Santa Ana River)

Each panelist spoke briefly of accomplishments but also what was needed to continue the good work that has been started. All agreed that the proposed legislation would be a tremendous resource to continued planning and implementation.

A discussion followed about some of the specifics of the proposed legislation. Topics of discussion included funding mechanisms, organization, how the fund would be administered, the role of county, state and federal government.

The RCRC will host a meeting with urban counties to discuss the draft legislation. The CBC Watershed Committee will continue the dialog on the draft.